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SUBJECT: CZECH REPUBLIC - 2008 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 120019

¶1. Czech authorities continue to cooperate with the USG across a wide spectrum of security, law enforcement and military matters as part of the global war on terrorism. Whether protecting the Prague headquarters of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and other U.S. facilities, providing critical military assistance in Iraq and Afghanistan, or cooperating in criminal investigations, the Czech Republic remains a steadfast U.S. ally. While intelligence services continue to do their job well, ongoing shortage in the police force raises some concern about the government's ability to effectively respond to a terrorist incident.

¶2. The Czech Republic continues to make significant contributions in support of coalition efforts. In 2008, the Czechs deployed a new Provincial Reconstruction Team to Logar and a new Special Operations task force in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). They also provided security to the Dutch PRT in Uruzgan, deployed an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team to work alongside the Afghanistan National Air Corps, and continue the deployment of a 100-person military field hospital based at the Kabul International Airport. The Czechs also took part in the U.S. efforts to equip the Afghanistan National Air Corps by donating 12 newly reconditioned Mi-family helicopters.

¶3. In total, in 2008 the Czechs deployed to Afghanistan over 500 soldiers in support of OEF and International Security Assistance Force, which represents a 100 percent increase from 2007. It is expected that the Czechs will slightly increase their troop levels in Afghanistan in 2009 and deploy a new Czech Air Force helicopter detachment. In Iraq, Czech forces successfully transitioned from providing security in Basra to helping train the Iraqi Armored Corps in Tadjil. The Czech forces will complete their mission in Iraq by the end of 2008, leaving only a small presence at the NATO Training Mission.

¶4. On the information sharing front, the Czech Interior Ministry signed a cooperative treaty with the United States on October 15, establishing the National Contact Point for Terrorism in Prague (NCPT) to open on April 15, 2009. The NCPT is intended as a specialized and centralized analytical and information gathering unit of the Czech police for combating terrorism. The NCPT will monitor and evaluate terrorist threats and will cooperate with other law enforcement agencies to detect and prevent terrorist acts. Within the next two - three years, the Police Presidium plans to establish a Passenger Information Unit within NCPT and a National Criminal Bureau that would be partner with NCPT, with a long term goal of bringing other emergency, law enforcement and intelligence agencies under the NCPT umbrella.

¶5. A continued shortage of manpower in the police force raises some concern about the government's ability to effectively respond in the event of a terrorist incident. Since the end of 2007, the police Combating Terrorism and Organized Crime Unit has recruited 40 top level professionals and provided training, including language training for the new officers. 80 more officers, however, are still needed.

¶6. Police sources report that there has been no terrorist threat so far in the Czech Republic. Although there may be potential risks, according to the Czech security and intelligence sources' assessment the Czech Republic does not face any open threat from Islamic terrorists. Embassy contacts at the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs say that during the Czech EU Presidency from January to June 2009, the country's priorities in combating terrorism will be enhancing Trans-Atlantic cooperation, as well as cooperation with Eastern Europe and Western Balkans countries.

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